

778

756 women resort for the cure of every ailment, physical or moral.

756

755 Is a child ailing, it is carried by its anxious mother to the most eminent Sheikh within reach, who cures it by imposition, not of hands, but of feet, by breathing on it with his holy breath, or by hanging some sacred

- [777] charm around its little neck. The first-named remedy may sound startling, but is actually applied, as I can vouch from personal observation.¹ The baby is laid on its back, and the Sheikh, laying his hands on the shoulders of two of his disciples who stand on either side, places his feet and rests his entire weight for a few seconds on the child's body. The Dervishes also
757 expound dreams, read the future, and furnish every other species of occult information of which their clients may stand in need.

776

Some Christian saints belonging to the Armenian calendar are also highly revered by the Kurdish tribesmen. Of these perhaps Surp Sarkis, or St. Sergius, is the one whose aid is most frequently sought. Kurdish warriors, when about to enter on a campaign, resort
[777] to his tomb, and seek to enlist his favour and protection by there sacrificing a ram and lighting wax
778 tapers.

776

The strange and widespread Oriental myth of Khidhr-Elias, in his double character of sea and land deity, is also current among the Kurds, with whom he is Khidhr on land and Elias on the sea, and by whom he is invoked as a kind of guardian angel.

¹ I witnessed this strange practice at Salamis, after a service in the midst of the Mevlevi, or "dancing" Dervishes, as they are commonly called by Europeans.

information, it would be difficult to assign such a house plan to any definite cultural horizon, but the architectural attempt to conceal the women is clearly Islamic, and, while it had its initial expansion under the Arabic caliphates, probably had its greatest influence in Kurdistan under the Turks when such things were carried to an extreme, at the same time reinforced by the prestige of a ruling class, in most parts of the Ottoman Empire.

The entrance of the house requires special attention, for certain important customs surround it. The doors are of heavy timbers, swinging on iron hinges, and, lacking a metal lock, are bolted at night with a heavy wooden bar which is kept in place by a second piece above it on a pivot. The outer doorway may have a fuel lamp for night and in many cases is furnished with charms designed to ward off the evil eye, a belief which will be discussed in a later section. These are characteristically a blue porcelain plate, embedded in the mud wall-surfacing, or a pair of old shoes hung on a nail. The popular reasoning behind the second device is that it indicates to a person with the eye that "your malevolent glance is as powerful as our pair of old shoes," an explanation that probably has little to do with the origin of the custom. Whenever the construction of a house is completed, the new owner sacrifices an animal, a sheep or a goat, by cutting its throat before the door and smears some of the blood on the doorposts and the threshold. Often he dips his head in the blood, and applies it to the door, making by

342
[174][562]
[177]

[373]

[754]
[777]
[751]342
792[751]
[777]

122

its imprint the so-called "Hand of Fatima" (referred, almost certainly ex post facto, to the daughter of the Prophet), a symbol found in almost all parts of the Middle East, particularly in amulet jewelry. The same sacrifice is applied to new additions to the house, and, in case a new storey has been built, the throat of the animal is slit over a window sill. It will be seen that when a bride enters her new home, an animal is similarly slaughtered before the threshold and the maiden's sandal is dipped in its blood. It is an incredible breach of etiquette, if not criminal, to enter a house without announcing oneself, a usage which is supposed to have an origin in the life of the Prophet, and custom demands that the visitor knock and wait outside until ushered in. The door is usually left ajar during the day, but anyone save members of the immediate family are prohibited from entrance until permission is given.

Water flows past the houses in narrow ditches beside the streets, and is conducted to an interior basin by means of a pipe. Every larger house has somewhere, typically in the vestibule of the front door, a huge earthen jar for drinking water with a capacity of twenty or thirty gallons which is filled whenever necessary. This jar, held a few feet off the ground in an iron or wooden frame, has a porous bottom through which the liquid is filtered, dripping slowly into a second receptacle beneath it, and, by reason of evaporation, the filtered water is cooled to

342
782
[777] ●
[75]

[585]

574

312
271
445

313

these graves become shrines in time, and the object of pilgrimage from nearby villages. The typical indication of a shrine is either a low, quadrilateral, rubble wall about the grave or a cairn of stones. Those who visit the shrine with some purpose characteristically tie a piece [782] of white rag on the end of a pole and lean the pole against the inner surface of the wall. Some shrines have bundles of these crude banners standing in them. The meaning of the rag is variable. In some cases the visitor will return and reclaim it, incorporating it in a charm, while in [77] others it is simply the sign of a vow that the suppliant, if the shaykh buried there will bring about the desired favor, will sacrifice so many animals or give so much money to the poor. The most auspicious days, it might be [777] noted, to visit a shrine are Wednesdays and Thursdays. The six most noted shrines near the town of Rowanduz are as follows:

1. Shaykh Firdi Mawili near the village of Kani Kab. Shaykh Firdi Mawili is said to have lived about two hundred years ago, "in the time of Kar Tasha."
2. Shaykh Sa'idi Galikarak near the village of Karak. The shrine is said to be very old, dating perhaps from the time of the Islamic conquest.
3. Shaykh Saran in the village of Saran itself. Shaykh Saran is said to have died about fifty years ago.
4. Shaykh Uay Shaykhan on the road to Kewick. "No one knows how old it is, but it is very ancient."
5. Shaykh Muhammad or Shaykh Malik, the second most famous shrine in the district, at Hajji Uaran.
6. Shaykh Muhammad or Shaykh Mula. "The shepherds of Shaykh Muhammad," near the shrine of

be blamed for it, and there is no witch-hunting on its account. The damage is done in the single glance, and there is no known technique for averting the inevitable catastrophe once it has been initiated.

754
761

On the other hand, preventive charms are great in number. First among them are those derived from the Quran, slips of paper on which certain passages have been written or copies of the work itself. The scrolls can be obtained in metal cases which are worn about the throat, sometimes as a part of the jewelry, but are more commonly stitched in cloth packets hung on a string around the neck or pinned to the shoulder. Metal disks inscribed with the name of God are also in use, as well as expensive types of pendants which exhibit complete paragraphs from the Quran. Two popular items made up into charms are imported from Iran, irregularly shaped bits of turquoise or blue porcelain and small white sea-shells. These are pierced and either strung on a thread or kept in a cloth bag. One charm is to sew two green beads in a piece of cloth, another is a piece of pumice wrapped in a cloth, and a third, called masq, consists of two pieces of the yellow bark of a certain tree hung on a string with a yellow bead between them. A piece of cloth from the grave of a holy man may be incorporated in some packets. An interesting symbol, a wheel whose four spokes are filled with geometric designs, is painted on the walls of houses or embroidered on cloth and sewn on the garments of children.

751
777
301

[439]

751.
777
[531]

children. That a blue porcelain plate or a pair of old shoes is often installed beside the door of a house has been noticed. An iron horseshoe, as in America, may also be nailed above a door or on a wall. A human hand cut out of metal, the "Hand of Fatima" spoken of previously, is often found in jewelry. Adults seem to require little protection against the evil eye, but younger children, particularly males, almost always have charms pinned to their garments and their cradles are hung with them. Houses and animals are similarly protected. There is some rationalization of these charms. Those derived from the Quran have a power within them. The others, apart from their intrinsic qualities, deflect the glance of the evil eye from the object in question to themselves, a sort of magnetic property, because of their bright colour, their design, or something else.

777 ●
751

[301]

[354]

Charms such as these have a variety of origins. Miniature copies of the Quran, metal disks, beads, pieces of turquoise, and shells are imported by the merchants and sold in the bazar, not only to the townspeople, but to the villagers among whom they are always in great demand. Slips of paper on which appropriate Quranic verses have been written may be obtained from one of the qullas or some other literate specialist. Cloth from the tomb of a holy man is easily obtained. Most persons assemble their own combinations, stitching them in cloth bags which are worn about the neck or pinned to the garments. Many of these are not solely to ward off

318

the evil eye, but have other purposes. The bodyguard of a chiefdom might carry one which protects his freed gaffers, and a great number are used to cure badly ill. One of the gaffers makes a practice of writing charms of this type. Such pieces of paper are usually soaked in water and the liquid is then lapped. Recently a poor woman with some complaint visited the medical officer and the latter wrote her a prescription which could have been filled in Kabil. Under the impression that the medical officer, who neglected to explain the matter to her, operated like the gaffers, the woman took the piece of paper to her home, mixed it with water, and drank it off. It might be mentioned that she was cured, and, the doctor said, reappeared the next day to request an identical piece of paper as insurance against the illness in the future. There are many numerous practitioners of white magic in the town, gaffers, gaffers, and others, some of whom demand fees and others not. The barber, Hajji Mustafa, has one piece for all ill. He ties a piece of string about the patient's wrist and "graps" over it. The investigator was furnished with some almost classical rationalizations, of illnesses, for example, "if a man is bitten by a mad dog, he will be cured when the dog is killed."

751
777
755756
755
772

The gaffers (from a Persian word meaning "poor" and adopted into Arabic in this sense) occupies a position of considerable importance in everyday life. It is unnecessary here to discuss the origins and the character of the gaffers.

756
772

330

each dwelling give them a small run and pour a little water 789
over the dolls. Another custom is to empty a basin of
water on the ground after the departure of a traveler. (484)

Brown noticed this as he was leaving Tekran

... as I mounted amidst many good wishes for my
journey I heard the splash of water as it was thrown
after me. What the origin of this curious ceremony
may be I do not know, neither did I see it practiced
on any other occasion.

In Kwandua, Tuesday is considered to be an unlucky 777
day for any outstanding enterprise, such as a major business
transaction or a wedding. In among many primitive groups,

the parings of fingernails and hair from a comb are not to 302
be thrown away. There is no belief that they might be used
in black magic, but it is considered "best" to wrap them in
a bit of paper or a rag and place the packet in a crevice.

A tooth is also put in a hole of some sort in the wall of [751]
the house, "in order that no one will get a headache."

Dreams are, to some extent, considered to have prophetic
significance. "An angel may come in a dream," it was said, 787
"and point out the location of buried treasure." Some of [774]
the other superstitions, for example, the significance
attached to bread, have been noticed in previous sections.

In concluding this section, it is difficult, if not 771
impossible, to assay the piety of the inhabitants of
Kwandua as a whole. There are many of the townspeople who
do not say five prayers daily or fast during Ramadan, and a
large number of the chieftains seem to take their faith

¹Brown, 1893, p. 174.

126

Marriage preparation

583
174
369

does not mention that the man must pay any bride price. She does it quite agree with the information I was given about urban conditions among Arabs in Egypt, when he told the wedding expenses of the bride's family equal the sum paid to bride wealth by the bridegroom, but states that the money expended by the former goes on furniture, clothes and trinkets for the bride, and that all this, called "shahar", is the bride's personal property, taken with her in the event of divorce⁽¹⁾, whereas he makes no mention of the bride's family providing any form of gift to the bridegroom and his family.

585
241

Wedding preparation. Of the bride's wealth the main gifts and the gifted costs are made by male relatives in the house. On the night before a ceremony takes place in the house where, under the supervision of the women in the family, the cats are killed, long fatty women and jellies from the oil, maida and biscuits purchased in Baghdad and Soliman. When the material was cut out, the bride's representative, then a married woman, brought a large piece of hot sugar which, with a sugar hammer, was crushed and covered over the material. This was said to bring good luck.

(177)

The water ceremony was one of a roll of English paper the girls of genuine Kurdish form and the dresses given by the bride's family to male relatives of the bridegroom. The ceremony then called the pieces of material together, and left to use them in her own home.

585
302
315

The day before the wedding in my informant's house at Soliman a young woman arrived in order to remove all superfluous hair from the bride's body, while the bride herself removed the public hair during a single violent lach in the house's bathroom. Whereas an unmarried Kurdish girl, as with the marriage, keeps her body free of hair⁽²⁾, hairs are plucked out or removed by smearing on a paste, the composition of which I was unable to discover. Dickson mentions a depilatory of this kind with the Shabari, a solution of lime and arsenic⁽³⁾ used by the well-to-do, while other women pluck out the hair with their fingers. Lane states that in Egypt women use a kind of resin called "shahar shahar", which is smeared on to a melted state, whereas other women pluck the hairs out "after merely rubbing the part with ointment of charcoal"⁽⁴⁾. At another place Lane⁽⁵⁾ refers to a depilatory, "marrat", composed of quicklime mixed with about one eighth part of opium. This powder is stirred in water to a paste that is smeared on, leaving the hairs in two minutes, after which it is washed off.

603

This removal of hair in my informant's family then took place in the house with the help of an expert, and not, as reported by Gumpert about the Palestinian Arabs, in the public bath⁽⁶⁾. It was said that the bridegroom went through a similar process⁽⁷⁾.

586
341
197

In the bride's house this form of beauty treatment in connection with the marriage was of great interest to all the women there. This was so far that an aunt of the bride grasped her by the legs as she sat in the bath in the courtyard, and attempted to prevent her in order to satisfy herself that the public hair had been duly removed. It was possible to determine this as the bride that evening was not wearing Kurdish women's costume with long fatty trousers, but a long, pink nightgown with pulled down - a European phenomenon adapted into the Kurdish dress where, even with a little jacket but without long trousers. Apart from this episode, which must be considered as indicative of the extent to which a wedding, down to the last detail, is a family and not a private affair, Kurds

834